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## **CARDIN, GRAHAM, LEAHY INTRODUCE BIPARTISAN LEGISLATION TO PROTECT LAW ENFORCEMENT NATIONWIDE**

Washington, DC – **U.S. Senators Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Patrick Leahy (D-VT) joined together last week to introduce S. 3972, the *National Blue Alert Act of 2010***, which would encourage the creation and integration of “Blue Alert” plans by State and local governments, and law enforcement agencies across the country. The Blue Alert system would operate like the “Amber Alert” system currently used to locate abducted children, and would provide the means to speed the apprehension of violent criminals who seriously injure or kill local, state, or federal law enforcement officers.

“There are more than 900,000 police officers in the United States who put their lives on the line everyday to protect our citizens and make our communities safer,” **said Senator Cardin.**

“Maryland has been a leader in the use of the Blue Alert System and the *National Blue Alert Act of 2010* will expand this valuable tool, helping to disseminate important, time-sensitive information about offenders who have injured or killed a police officer. Based on the success of the Amber Alert system, the results should help save lives and put less people at risk.”

“Our law enforcement officers and emergency personnel dedicate themselves to protecting the health and safety of citizens in South Carolina and around the nation,” **said Senator Graham.**

“The national Blue Alert System would be funded through the existing COPS Technology Program, and the existing state systems are already seeing local results. Now is the time to expand the systems’ reach and dedicate the resources to protecting more lives. Our law enforcement officers deserve the very best, and I am pleased to support them with this critical tool.”

“I was pleased to join Senator Cardin and Senator Graham to introduce the *National Blue Alert Act*,” **said Senator Leahy.** “This is an important bill to protect the brave men and women who put themselves in harm’s way in the interest of public safety. The Blue Alert system created by the legislation would operate like the successful Amber Alert program used to locate missing children. I look forward to working toward passing this important legislation.”

According to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund officer deaths have surged by 43% in the first half of 2010. Eighty-seven officers died in the line of duty between January 1 and June 30th of this year. If this rate continues 2010 could become one of the deadliest years for U.S. law enforcement in two decades.

The bipartisan ***National Blue Alert Act of 2010*** has been endorsed by the National Fraternal Order of Police, which has urged “expedited consideration of this legislation before the conclusion of the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress.”

Currently there is no national alert system that provides immediate information to other law enforcement agencies, the media or the public at large. Many states have created a state blue alert system in an effort to better inform their local communities. For example, after the unfortunate murder of Maryland State Trooper Wesley Brown, Maryland Governor O’Malley immediately signed an executive order establishing the Maryland blue alert system. Florida was the first state to implement the alert system in 2008. They were followed by Texas, Oklahoma, Alabama, Georgia and Delaware.

This legislation creates a National Blue Alert program within in the Department of Justice under the COPS Technology Program. Congress currently authorizes funds for the continued development of technologies and automated systems that help tribal, state and local law enforcement agencies prevent, respond to, and investigate crime. S. 3972 authorizes \$10 million from this program to be appropriated for the creation of blue alert plans throughout the United States. It would direct the Department of Justice to designate a Blue Alert national coordinator who will encourage states, which have not already done so, to develop Blue Alert plans and establish voluntary guidelines. This new technology will provide police officers and other emergency units with the ability to react quickly to apprehend violent offenders.

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